

From: Sw69guy@aol.com
To: Mike Powell
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 2:01 AM
Subject: THIS IS WRONG

Mr Powell,

What you are proposing (and insisting on no matter who thinks what) is wrong! When everyone disagrees with you and is against you ... don't you think you should step back and maybe ask why? Maybe reexamine your decisions, maybe give back the money or forget about the job you were promised once you left your post.

Allowing a hand full of corporations to control all the media is not American, not democratic and most definitely not in the best interest of having an enlightened & informed public Surely that is not the ultimate goal is it?

Max T Lambert Jr.
Sugarland, TX.

CC: Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein

From: Bob Reith
To: Kathleen Abernathy
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 2:35 AM
Subject: vote no

I urge you not to relax the broadcast ownership rules that protect American citizens from media monopolies.

These proposed changes would pave the way for giant media conglomerates to gain near-total control of radio and television news and information in communities across our nation. And many of the corporations that are now lobbying the FCC to relax these ownership rules already have a known track record in attempting to keep opposing viewpoints off the air.

The American people deserve to hear more than one point of view on important issues. Therefore, for the sake of our democracy and our freedom, I urge you to continue the broadcast ownership protections that, for decades, have helped to ensure a healthy political debate in our country.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Reith

From: Michael Anderson
To: Mike Powell, Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 2:44 AM
Subject: Re: Docket 02-277

Dear Commissioners,

PLEASE do not destroy our system of diverse media ownership by changing the present rules. It would be a disaster for this country to allow a handful of powerful corporations to control so many media outlets.

Thank you,
Michael Anderson

From: Vitarai@aol.com
To: Mike Powell
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 3:14 AM
Subject: FCC Deregulation

Dear Commissioner Powell,

I see you will be meeting to review "the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996." I also note that the "Commission will consider a Report and Order concerning its broadcast multiple ownership rules." I also am familiar with the fact that the airwaves you are authorized to supervise, administer, and regulate are the public's airwaves. You were given mandates by the our representatives in Congress to oversee our airwaves not on any corporation's behalf, not for Rupert Murdoch, Disney Corp., or General Electric, but on the behalf of over 280 million Americans.

I do not see how, under any reasonable examination of the issue a deregulation, (elimination of Ownership rules) would benefit any American other than those who own stock in a very few corporations, or more directly those pulling down heavy pay checks from those same corporations and their lobbyists. You are supposed to be listening to the public not meeting in private with corporate interests to make your decisions. With no advance public notice of exactly what rules will change, how you will change those that exist, how do you expect to get this public input. From your one meeting in Virginia? No document even exists yet to give public input on, and yet you propose to "consider a Report and Order concerning its broadcast multiple ownership rules" this coming Monday.

If it were not for Commissioner Adelstein's efforts to traverse the country to hose of us unable to afford either the time or money to attend a meeting in Washington wouldn't have been given even that much voice. I am but one voice Commissioner Powell. I ask that you at pay attention to the many voices that are rising up against this monopolistic grab for power and avarice. I urge you and all of your fellow commissioners to not eliminate the current ownership rules for Radio and Television. If anything, they should be strengthened, not weakened or eliminated. The elimination of the rules will only degrade the sad state of the flow of information in our country even further.

I have cable TV, my parents do not. I don't actually see myself having greater access to information via TV than my parents when so many of the stations are simply subsidiaries of the larger networks to which my parents have always had access. Personally, I have turned to the Internet for more accurate reporting. It is there that I first heard of your attempts to gut what little FCC regulations remain to protect against monopolies in the media. I respectfully ask that you respond to me in writing with your decision on this issue, and a detailed explanation of how this will benefit me, and my friends, and family.

Sincerely,
Raymond Vitale
150 Hartford
San Francisco, CA 94114

CC: Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein

From: Ed Barlow-Pieterick
To: Kathleen Abernathy
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 3:27 AM
Subject: Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules

Ms. Abernathy

I am writing to ask you and the commission to stop it's effort to redefine the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules. The process has been difficult to follow. Some feel that it has been deliberately secretive. I am in no position to make that determination but I do know that the public has been poorly informed on this issue. This is a most serious matter that shouldn't be completed without the publics full knowledge of what is being proposed and what impacts it will have. This impacts the public's air waves and all media. From what I understand, the reason for pursuing these changes is to make the business of communication more efficient. Not necessarily more informative just more efficient.

The FCC is supposed to serve the public interest. Making media ownership more profitable will not serve the public interest. If I appear to misunderstand what the rule changes represent, I am not alone. I know of no one who thinks this is a good idea. If you need more time to explain the benefit to us then take the time. This is not the kind of decision to ram down the publics throat. If the public understands you proposal and doesn't accept it you should protect the public interest an accept the public will.

Please don't do this. It's wrong. If it isn't wrong, it must be terribly misunderstood which is also a good reason to stop and spend more time informing us of what it is we have to gain.

Ed Barlow-Pieterick
Corvallis, Or

From: positive
To: Mike Powell, Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 3:28 AM
Subject: June 2 vote to regulate in favor of media conglomeration

I haven't yet deduced the U.S. government's reason for facilitating the accumulation of communications technology in a few powerful hands remote from us little untouchables. Here are the possibilities:

1 The natural synergy between the greedy, the rich, and the power-mad encourages them to cooperate as a class.

2 Power in the future will be delineated by electronic integration. Economies of scale overseas, unregulated by comparison to the U.S., would come to culturally dominate America. Although cultural domination today is commonly regarded as banal or beneficial (since it's "us" doing the dominating), this would be followed by economic, political, and eventually military domination. So the U.S. must dominate world-wide communications through conglomerates larger than anyone else can put together. These become even larger multi-nationals that presumably remember their roots here with "us."

3 The many little people you rule are so dangerous that control must be increased. Divergent, dissenting and interesting points of view must be eliminated from the public's mind. A more reliable propaganda system is needed to achieve and maintain total control.

4 The possibility of the U.S. being blindsided from presently unknown quarters requires us to act as one nation, with one voice. The individual's interest, convenience and necessities must be subordinated to that of the nation. If the benefits, power, and money from this strategy were to flow to all of us equally, it would be a hive strategy. But since the flow would be to those rich, powerful, insulated few presently christened the owners of media, it reminds me more of facism.

5 All of the above; which, actually, all remind me of facism.

When we look at the world, we are frightened. I think we would prefer to see a comforting mirror image of ourselves. John Lennon once said, "Drugs are a mirror." Would John Lennon and the Plastic Ono Band be played on the radio if they just started up today? The answer is in the hands of corporate conglomerates whose hands are closed. And you think their grip needs to be tighter? I think you should take drugs, a lot of drugs, whatever it takes . . . then vote this cruel, convenient evil down, and even maybe feel like just a concerned human again instead of a corporation.

Charles Neller
Long-time holder of natural-born citizenship (but anything's for sale)

From: positive
To: Mike Powell, Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein
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Charles Neller
Long-time holder of natural-born citizenship (but anything's for sale)

From: Russell Toh
To: Kathleen Abernathy
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 3:41 AM
Subject: June 2 Vote

I am writing to you to express my strong opposition to the proposed allowance of increased ownership of media. I understand that you are in

favor of the proposed increase and I write to you in the hope that you will recognize that by voting for this increase, you will be neglecting the duty of your position to act in accordance with the public's opinion

on this matter. In addition, I believe a vote in favor of increased media ownership does not protect the public's right to a free and diverse exchange of ideas and opinions through a variety of media outlets. At the very least, the vote should be postponed

Maureen Leahy
211 So. Fremont Street, #411
San Mateo, CA 94401

From: cj.rathjen
To: Kathleen Abernathy
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 3:44 AM
Subject: FCC rules need to encourage more diversity

We need more diversity in news not less! I turn on TV or read the papers and nine out of ten are discussing the same news. The only diversity I get is in the morning when I listen to the public broadcasting on the radio. The owners have too much control of the news today. Where are the discussions about touchy subjects i.e Social Security, Children's health coverage, Weapons of mass destruction, Ken Lay, Government Reports that have been hushed i.e. deficit, energy plan, etc.

Also the TV networks need to pay the government an annual fee for use of the airwaves.

From: cj.rathjen
To: Kathleen Abernathy
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 3:45 AM
Subject: FCC rules need to encourage more diversity

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Also the TV networks need to pay the government an annual fee for use of the airwaves.

From: cj.rathjen
To: Mike Powell, Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 3:59 AM
Subject: <No Subject>

Isn't it bad enough that the president was voted in by a couple of political hacks without you squashing public news and debate. Especially since I did not even vote for you guys. How the hell did you get this power to change us into a dictatorship????

From: Alan Tong
To: mcpowell@fcc.gov, Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 4:04 AM
Subject: Delay the ownership of the airways changes

Commissioner Powell,
I am writing you to tell you I dislike and oppose the consolidation of media outlets as is being considered on Monday and voted on. While we have both fear of less points of view and donnot want to have a further negative influence of Television Radio and traditional press on our lives and precious time, the focussing of ownership and it's narrowing areas of production and involvement are not steps taken in a positive direction. We need something on the order of a regulation that helps the broad numbers of people adjust to their rapidly changing situations and to the change in America's world position. I've been hearing about this issue from about 2 or 3 stations [radio and tv] in the Bay Area and though I'm really tired now, I want to voice my mind and let you know that I am one person that does not llike what I'm seeing here. I want to go to work for a data processing company and I think that publishing and media ownership consolidation works in the reverse of what I ammost interested in. Please delay your Tuesday judgement on this law.

Thank you Alan Tong

Do you Yahoo!?

Yahoo! Calendar - Free online calendar with sync to Outlook(TM).
<http://calendar.yahoo.com>

CC: alanbtong@yahoo.com

From: rojones18@aol.com
To: Kathleen Abernathy
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 4:05 AM
Subject: Reconsider

Please do not change the policy of ownership of the airwaves.

The proposed change in ownership requirements are a direct affront to public ownership of the air waves. We are already seeing way to much of this, the major cable news stations don't report news, they only obsess about the current hot topic. (I, for one am very tired of hearing about the Lacy Peterson case.) I'm very concerned with the state our country is in, and none of these stations report on anything of substance regarding what's happening. All they seem to want to provide is the "talking heads" to put out the latest spin

If you will study the reasons for this policy, you will find they were set up to prevent the one opinion policies of early radio from taking over all media time. And go back to the newspaper ownership histories, wars were fought to sell newspaper.

We are in a very scary time in this country, our rights are being thrown to the winds, our leaders seem to think more or party politics (that includes both parties) than what is good for the country as a whole. It seems that McCarthyism is coming into style again.

Please consider my comments and do not change this policy.

Ruth O. Jones

From: Clarinda Moore
To: Kathleen Abernathy
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 4:06 AM
Subject: F.C.C. vote on Monday, June 2nd, '03

Dear Commissioner:

I've never written to anyone in the government before, but I'm so distressed about the possibility of media being owned by fewer and fewer entities I just had to do something. I have to say I don't want this to happen. Access to information is so fundamental. I can't understand why this wasn't a bigger story and why it wasn't reported sooner. I don't see what can be done if voting is Monday.

I'd be more specific about my thoughts but the shortness of time makes me feel eloquence is pointless. Besides, the issue seems so transparent. I will go to the sites mentioned at the KRON channel 4 site.

---- I'm trying to figure what I could say to whom that could be any help. I'm glad someone in your position sees this as an extremely bad possibility. I think it's positively a precipice-- this vote-- and I'm not politically inclined at all. I don't take a paper or watch much news, yet I consider that any move that allows more consolidation of ownership of media will be not just dangerous but inevitably disasterously damaging to the exchange of information and ideas. It's pointless to elucidate since you must know this very well.

Thank you for hearing me. I hope I can figure out what little thing I can do to stem the tide. Suggestions appreciated.

I am clarinda@sonic.net

Sincerely,
Clarinda Moore

From: Tim Ferguson
To: Kathleen Abernathy
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 4:27 AM
Subject: consolidation

This FCC consolidation move is bullshit. We say NO, NO, NO!

Yrs,
Tim Ferguson

From: Chris Niswander
To: Mike Powell
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 4:43 AM
Subject: Vibrant public discourse, not media oligopoly, is the #1 long-term protection for our national secur

30 May 2003

Chris Niswander
421 E Drachman St
Tucson AZ 85705

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
Washington DC 20554

Re: Vibrant public discourse, not media oligopoly, is the #1 long-term protection for our national security.

Dear Chairman Powell:

Please oppose any increase in the national broadcast ownership cap and do not proceed with the rulemaking scheduled for June 2.

A democratic republic needs a broad variety and full range of independent media voices. Current trends towards oligopoly threaten our access to the broad variety and range of perspectives that we need.

If the broad and various perspectives that we need are not fostered by the traditional media, what will happen to us? Our nation will become less able to foresee the complex possible implications of our actions and of current events. We will be more likely to be completely blindsided by crises which will threaten the future of the Republic.

The 9-11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were bad. But if we continue on our current national course of media concentration, we can assure our nation will suffer disasters that will make 9-11 look like a picnic. What are these disasters, you might ask me? No one person can tell you. No one media conglomerate can tell you. Even a group of several media conglomerates is inadequate to tell you. Only a full and lively public discourse, taking full advantage of the long-term protections for national security provided by the Bill of Rights, will find these threats and warn us of them before it's too late.

Do you remember how the Soviet Union fell apart like wet tissue paper? If we fail to foster the fullness of public discourse that we need, that could be us. True, the USSR was communist. But the pseudo-free enterprise of media oligopoly, with its members' power to exert concentrated anti-democratic powers over our government, might not be enough to save us.

Please do what is right for the United States and for a world that needs us to be strong and wise.

If you are interested in considering what would specifically serve the

interests of the media conglomerates, consider this: to the extent that our national media are reduced to a few conglomerates, the long-term ability of our nation's media to innovate and to compete will decline.

After the United States' automobile companies were reduced to a few complacent conglomerates and domestic competition was minimized, those conglomerates gradually became unable to compete against foreign producers. Even much smaller (but more numerous!) Japanese companies could beat them and take away much of the American market. It was embarrassing when the United States, a former industrial powerhouse, couldn't even provide itself with adequate cars, and lost its world leadership in this field. But wouldn't it be even more embarrassing if the result of the current FCC's leadership was to make Americans dependent on foreign news sources after our nation's media businesses gutted themselves? Just a thought..."comrade."

Sincerely,

Chris Niswander

CC: Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein

From: John Bauer
To: Kathleen Abernathy
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 5:25 AM
Subject: Media owenship regulation changes

Ms. Abernathy:

I strongly urge you to NOT implement the relaxing of media ownership regulations. Such a move will be destructive to our democratic republic and raise First Amendment concerns. Pres. Bush and my congressional representatives have been notified of my concerns.

E. John Bauer
2736 Val Verde Pl SW
Albuquerque, NM 87105

From: Jordan Adema
To: Mike Powell, Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 5:27 AM
Subject: media deregulation: don't concentrate culture, power

Dear Commissioners and Chairman,

I urge you to protect the interests of Americans and their channels of cultural and political dialogue. The process of the free market--competition--as well as the dictates of common sense demand that you continue to maintain and refine existing regulations in order to keep the media properly decentralized and competitive.

Do not further promote deregulation. It can only lead to the stifling of our intellectual lifeblood--giving up the control of our national conversation to those who care only for the lowest common denominators, the idiots of our nation.

thank you,
Jordan Adema

250 Warren S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

From: Johna
To: Mike Powell
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 5:33 AM
Subject: "multiple ownership" hearing

I choose which radio programs to listen to, based on my preferences, and I usually don't even know who owns them. I enjoy conservative talk shows, so I search for them in whatever area I happen to be. I could, however, listen to multitudes of local shows. It's my choice.

I heard tonight on a national TV news show that radio is "supposed" to be local programming. Why is that, any more than TV is "supposed" to be local? We choose where to turn the dial, just as we choose when to click the remote. Thank goodness some programming is becoming available in both venues that I "choose" to listen to.

Why is it so frightening that conservatives might like to hear some reporting they agree with?

CC: Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, kjweb@fcc.gov, Commissioner Adelstein

From: Frederick Wardell
To: Mike Powell
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 5:43 AM
Subject: Media deregulation

Chairman Michael Powell

You should not relax the rules for media ownership but should tighten them. I am very concerned about this serious threat to our free speech.

I have heard you are not listening to the public and our overwhelming opposition to relaxing the rules for media ownership; that you have not made public the details; that you are trying to slip this one past us before everyone finds out. Is this really how the FCC is run? Do you really believe that monopolies are a good thing? Are you not "civil servants"? You certainly are not serving the interests of this great country but sabotaging our freedom of information.

Do you really believe that the giant corporations are not going to influence the way the radio stations, news papers, and TV stations they own give us the news? I am so taken aback by your actions... I think the FCC needs to be investigated.

If you go ahead and further deregulate media ownership, I think you and the politicians that support this will find a very large number of the public will be very unhappy about this.

Sincerely,

Frederick M. Wardell

CC: Kathleen Abernathy

From: jac0b_chunkster@hushmail.com
To: Kathleen Abernathy
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 5:50 AM
Subject: dont deregulate!!!!

FCC Commishoners,

Please do not change TV staion ownership regulations, the issue of Docket 02-277.

Thank you,

Concerned about your privacy? Follow this link to get
FREE encrypted email: <https://www.hushmail.com/?l=2>

Free, ultra-private instant messaging with Hush Messenger
<https://www.hushmail.com/services.php?subloc=messenger&l=434>

Big \$\$\$ to be made with the HushMail Affiliate Program:
<https://www.hushmail.com/about.php?subloc=affiliate&l=427>

From: Jonathan R. Davey
To: Mike Powell, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Kathleen Abernathy, Commissioner Adelstein
Date: Sat, May 31, 2003 5:53 AM
Subject: Stop media monopoly

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Former FCC chairman: Deregulation is a right-wing power grab
Reed Hundt says Monday's historic vote is "the culmination of the attack by the right on the media."

By Eric Boehlert

May 31, 2003 | The Federal Communications Commission will meet in Washington on Monday for a historic vote on the future of media ownership in the United States. By all accounts, the Republican-dominated commission will ease long-standing rules so that more and more of the nation's newspapers and broadcast stations can be concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

Underlying that agenda, Clinton-era FCC chairman Reed Hundt sees something more primal unfolding: an extraordinary conservative power grab that could shape the political landscape for generations.

For all the philosophical conflict over diversity in the media and the efficiency of the free market, Hunt told Salon this week, the vote is really about an alliance of interests between the political right and the corporate media. "Conservatives," he said, "hope ... that the major media will be their friends."

In today's political and media environment, there's plenty of evidence that those hopes will come true. ABC News recently appointed conservative commentator John Stossel to co-host its primetime magazine "20/20." "These are conservative times. .," an ABC source told TV Guide. "The network wants somebody to match the times."

The FCC's two Democrats have strongly opposed the deregulation measure that's been pushed by current FCC chairman Michael Powell, a close ally of the Bush White House, and public response to the proposal has been heavily opposed. But Hundt's radical critique is all the more striking because he is an establishment lawyer thoroughly versed in the diplomatic niceties of high government office. He attended prep school with Al Gore and law school with Bill Clinton and served as FCC chairman under Clinton from 1993 to 1997. He is now a senior advisor at McKinsey and Co., the international consulting firm.

The FCC has long had rules regulating media ownership, based on the assumption that the number of broadcast frequencies is limited. The regulations were designed to ensure that radio and television stations remained diverse, independent voices and could withstand predatory conglomerates. But on Monday the FCC is expected to dump those rules.

A company like the News Corp., owned by conservative world-media mogul Rupert Murdoch, will be able to hold newspapers, television stations and radio stations in the same market. Conglomerates such as the News Corp. (Fox TV, Fox News, Fox Sports, 20th Century Fox Studio, the New York Post, HarperCollins Publishers) and Viacom (CBS, MTV, Paramount Studios and the Infinity radio network), would be allowed to snatch up more and more local TV affiliate stations nationwide. And, critics say, small and medium-size broadcast companies and newspaper publishers will likely be swallowed up by bigger competitors.

In the telephone interview Wednesday, Hundt warned that the massive media deregulation will exacerbate the dangerously close relationship that's emerged between sprawling U.S. media companies and the government. "If Dwight Eisenhower were alive today," he said, "he'd be warning us about the dangers of the military-industry-media complex."

During Hundt's term as FCC chairman, the landmark Telecommunications Act of 1996 was passed. As originally drafted by Republicans in Congress, the legislation would have virtually stripped away all media-ownership limits. In the end, Clinton signed into law a compromise version that allowed only the radio industry to be deregulated.

At the time, Hundt was among the few to warn of the consequences. The new laws would allow "a few companies to buy all the radio licenses in the country," he said then. "I don't believe that's good for this industry or for this country."

His words proved prophetic. Since the law's passage, Clear Channel Communications, which in 1995 owned approximately 40 radio stations, has expanded to approximately 1,200 outlets, nearly 1,000 more than its closest competitor. Together with Viacom-owned Infinity Broadcasting, it dominates an industry once made up of hundreds of competitors. Few people -- other than employees of Clear Channel and Viacom -- would suggest that radio as a source of news, information or entertainment has improved in any way because of consolidation. In fact, most would say it's become noticeably worse.

And that, Hundt told Salon, plays directly into conservatives' agenda

What do you think is behind the push for deregulation?

I think that fundamentally what we have here is a political debate. And let's just say that the [Bush] administration does not think that the big winners in the media consolidation game will be either the New York Times or the Washington Post.

Who will be the big winners?

Well, the conservative movement owns the FCC, the courts, Congress, the White House.

So you think that politics is more than a small part of what's going on?

Politics is always the greater part of all antitrust, and the debate now is, How do you apply antitrust to the media, which traditionally has been the job of the FCC? So it's not surprising that politics is the greatest single shaping influence on the outcome here.

Michael Powell and the proponents of deregulation say, "Look, if we don't do this, if we don't change the ownership rules, the courts will" -- and that federal courts have already struck down a number of the current ownership limits.

Well, it's the same crowd. The courts we're talking about here are made up of just a handful of people who are throwing parties in their Georgetown mansions for the commissioners who are casting the votes. It's the same club. It's not some kind of independent, objective authority we're talking about.

You seem to see much larger forces at work here.

I'm seeing democracy at work. People are getting what they voted for or what they let other people vote for.

But back to Powell's argument -- how as chairman would you handle this differently?

Any competent appellate lawyer could build a case for media diversity and win it in any fair court in the

country. Period.

So you don't think the FCC has doggedly pursued a legal challenge?

They haven't even taken it to the Supreme Court. When the Court of Appeals votes the right way -- pun intended -- then this FCC doesn't take the case to the Supreme Court, which is a much closer call on all issues. They don't ever try.

If you were chairman would you have taken them to the Supreme Court?

Big matters should go to the big court.

Back to 1995 when the Telecom Act was pending: A lot of the ownership limits about to be implemented were part of that proposed legislation, correct?

When Newt Gingrich was running the House of Representatives, effective in the fall of 1994, he called all the media owners together in a room down on Capitol Hill, and according to what people who were there told me, he told them he'd give them relaxed rules allowing media concentration in exchange for favorable coverage. Now I wasn't there, but that's what they said they understood he meant.

But in the end, those provisions for cross-ownership for newspaper and television, they didn't survive the Telecom Act, right?

In the end, President Clinton allowed only the radio industry to be consolidated. Not because he wanted it, but because he used up his political capital fighting consolidation in the other media groups.

And why was he opposed to cross-ownership for newspaper and television?

Because he believed all different points of view should have a voice in the mass media. That's not a very radical idea. In times past, Republicans believed in that also.

Did he have any practical experience in his past that led him to that?

He used to tell people there were only two major media outlets in Arkansas and if they were both owned by the same guy who hated him, then neither he nor any other progressive would ever get their message across.

But this is a different world today. Progressives would be better off going to a Ouija board to channel the spirits of Upton Sinclair and Ida Tarbell, rather than trying to shake the conservative majority at the FCC. There's no way the three votes there are going to be altered in any way by any kind of popular protest. You can walk the streets of the United States and you will never find a single person who's in favor of more consolidated media, unless by chance you happened to bump into one of Rupert Murdoch's children.

So the vote on Monday will be a culmination of what Newt Gingrich set in motion nearly 10 years ago after the Republican Revolution?

It's the culmination of the attack by the right on the media since the independent media challenged and helped topple Richard Nixon.

But in a sense aren't conservatives suspicious of the media? Why would they want media companies to become more powerful?

Conservatives hope, with some reason, that the major media will be their friends. That's what Dwight Eisenhower was talking about when he warned against the military-industrial complex in his last speech before leaving office. If Dwight Eisenhower were alive today he'd be warning us about the dangers of the military-industrial-media complex.

The concern was that that complex would not be a separate stand-alone one, and that it would soon morph into a quasi-governmental one?

Ever since the invention of the printing press, governments have tried to make an ally out of owners of the means of information distribution. That's as old a story as when the powers that be tried to suppress Gutenberg's Bible. Not because they didn't believe in the Bible, but because they didn't believe everyone should be able to get one.

This is a 600-year-old story. It's not a new story. But it's news to the United States that one side should get this close to that goal.

When did the FCC in effect get out of the regulation business?

I don't think it's out of the business, at least not until the June 2 vote. It's regulation to insist on market structures that provide multiple voices. That's good, healthy regulation. We don't need regulations that tell people what to say. But antitrust policy has always been used to promote diversity in all industries. And there's never been any industry where that's been more important than the media.

About the writer

Eric Boehlert is a senior writer at Salon.

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